Postage increase

Post office crushed by rush for stamps

By Dick Rebbeck
Journal Staff Writer

In three years as Rapid City's chief mailman, Postmaster Frank King had never seen a day like Tuesday at the main post office.

That was the first business day Monday being a holiday — since the nation's 32-cent G stamp went into effect at midnight the previous Thursday; and long lines of stamp buyers prevailed the entire day at the downtown post office and at its substations.

Finally, what the majority of people are buying are 3-cent stamps to make up the difference between the old 28-cent stamp and the new 32-cent rate," he said.

"I told them they had to go along with their leftover 28-cent stamps after doing their Christmas mailing," said King.

"I need a few myself." The new higher-rate stamp went on sale in mid-December, and many people presumably bought enough last month to last the new year.

King called Tuesday's run on 3-centers "probably the busiest day I've seen in three years as postmaster here. Our contract stations were also extremely busy." But stamp supplies held up at most windows.

While recognizing that 3-cent stamp supplies could possibly run out temporarily, King said he hoped to stock up overnight against another rush today.

Police: Drowning an accident

Vehicles are bumper to bumper entering the Rapid City Post Office parking lot Tuesday afternoon.

Initiative lumps two taxes

By Mark Andersen
Journal Staff Writer

An initiative that would kill a half-cent Rapid City sales tax also would restrict the use of other sales tax money.

Aldermen said the restrictions might result in a city property tax increase and urged a no vote. A yes vote on Jan. 17 supports the initiative.

The initiative would affect two half-cents of the city sales tax.

One half penny now pays for Rushmore Plaza Civic Center and would fund development projects after March, when the mortgage is paid. The council will decide which projects to fund if the tax survives.

How the initiative would affect the other half-cent was outlined Tuesday for the Rapid City Common Council.

City Finance Officer Richard Wahlen said that over the past three years, about $1.5 million of sales tax money was spent on projects the initiative would place off limits.

The non-civic center half-cent tax now is used for capital improvements to streets, parks and drainage, plus other measures state law permits. According to City Attorney Bob Jackson, the initiative would delete the wording "as permitted under state law." That change would affect several expenditures, including many at the city fire department.

After hearing the report, Alderman Tom Johnson said it was unfortunate the two tax provisions were lumped together. "These are not fluff projects," he said. The needed projects might have to be paid from a property tax increase, Johnson said.

"And I for one don't want to add to the property tax," Alderman Debra Cuffing noted that only city residents would fund the projects if property taxes were used. Half of sales tax money comes from people outside the city.

Initiative supporter Don Pay said project costs would not have to come from property taxes. "It means you (aldermen) would have to be responsible," Pay said.

Pay also said the initiative would not kill any of six proposed development projects, only the method of who chooses which projects to fund.

"It just won't be a slash fund for the council to decide," Pay said.

Jackson defended allowing elected aldermen to decide the projects, adding that the council's decision could be referred to a vote.

Mayor Ed McLaughlin said a priority would be placed on which projects to fund after the election.

Here are some expenditures that could not have been financed from sales tax dollars if the Initiative had been in effect:

Fire Department:
- $50,000; equipment in 1985.
- $419,292; new Southside fire station (No. 11, 1984).
- $35,000; Main station HVAC and cleaning, 1985.
- $15,000; Northside station roof, 1982.
- $57,200; Main station remodeling, 1991.

Pennington County Search and Rescue Team:
- $22,000; city share of building expansion, 1994.

Public Library:
- $17,800; energy audit and boiler upgrade, 1993.

Indoor Recreation Center:
- $13,000; needs analysis and economic feasibility study.
- $97,500; needs analysis, 1989.
- $97,500; needs analysis, 1990.
- $97,500; needs analysis, 1991.

Dahl Fine Arts Center:
- $7,400; expansion study, 1991.
- $7,800; expansion study, 1991.

Wells Fargo Transportation Center: